FOLK FORMULAS IN ENGLISH RIDDLES

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Abstract: Folklore texts have recently become the object of increasing linguistic and cultural analysis. The reason for this is the fact that folklore texts, which are characterized by stability of their structure seem to reflect the national perception of the world. Riddles attract scientists because of complexity of their structural organization, as well as the uniqueness of the encoding of the denotation. In the article the author explores presence of folk formulas in the English folk riddles. The authors come to the conclusion that there are two types of stable formulas. The first group of formulas is used to denote the beginning or the end of the riddle. Such formulas essentially perform the pragmatic function focusing the listener on the subsequent message, or motivate for the quick finding the right answer. The second group is involved in the encoding of the denotation, but does not bring additional information. The authors put forward the assumption, that a the second group phrases were created due to English national thinking and way of life of archaic man.

Keywords: riddle, folklore, folk formula, pragmatics, denotation

1. Introduction. Currently scientists have begun active studing the paremiological fund of the language [1,2,3,4], as it allows to trace the evolution the logic of thinking of the nation, the key mental categories, which are represented in the folklore texts. The structural organization of the folk riddles still remains one of the actual, actively developed question among folklorists and linguistics. Interest in the riddles can be explained by the fact that the study of the riddle allows us to trace which characteristics allocated to a particular nation when monitoring the subject, what was important to mention and what might be ignored. Many outstanding scientists wrote on the challenges of the riddles exploring [5,6,7,8]. Special attention was paid to the logic of construction of the genre [9,10,11,12]. Later the works devoted to the semantics of riddles, cultural concepts embedded in the text of the riddles began to appear [13,14,15]. So, it is difficult to say what exactly determines the choice of a metaphorical description of the denotation. Why some oblects depicled in dynamics and others in statics. Does that description reveal the nature of denotation?

In this article we analyze the presence of typical formulas in the description of the denotation. So, for the tales the typical formulas are Once upon a time … etc. Are there any typical formula in the riddles? What are they? Is it possible to systematize them? What function do they perform? Does the use of the typical formulas influence the encoding process of denotation?

2. Methods . For the undertaken study, we have analyzed the f English folk riddles, have identified folk formulas that occur in the text. Then we tried to systematize them and find out their functional affiliation.

3. Results. The folklore language of each nation differs from others by specific formulas, which broadcast the national peculiarities of world perception [16, 17]. This peculiarity can be traced in English Folk Riddles.

We noticed that typical folk phrases are used for beginning and completing in English Riddles. The call to find the answer always stands for the initial phrase: *Riddle me riddle: Me riddle me riddle me yander, tough me father have a thing, it is a very good thing, I hope you may clear this riddle, and hope you may not. Four feet sitting in four feet waiting on four feet (The cat sitting in the chair waiting on the rat* [18:p.164]; *Me riddle me raddle perhaps I might tell you this riddle and perhaps not. Me father has four son send them all to school to learn and only one can learn. – you put your` pot on three fire stone and only your pot can cook* [18: p.  410]; *Riddle me, riddle me, rot, tot, tot , a wee` wee men in red coat, a staff in his hand, and a stone in his throat, riddle me, riddle me, rot, tot, tot. Cherry*   [18: p. 231]. Using this phrase make us explore its importance. Why did people use it in some riddles and omit in others? To our mind, this formula reflects an old tradition to pronounce the following task. It helped listeners to distinguish the beginning of the riddle. This statement can be true because some riddle texts even cannot be taken as a question because of their intonation. For example: *Little Tommy Tucker went up a hill but he bust his gown, but not a tailor could not mend his gown (Egg)* [18: p. 218]. This text sounds like a short story and does not contain any question at first sight. Even the intonation doesn`t transmit any call to taking this message as a question that should be solved.

We claim in this case the utterance and the situation when it is said are closely tied so that the listener understands the affirmative sentence as a sign to find the coded object on his own motion.

From the other hand, *Riddle me riddle* - phrase can focus the listener on the following information and perceive it as well as possible.

Another group of phrases is used at the end of the riddle. *Riddle me, reddle me, rine-e-go, my father gave me some seed to sow. The seed was black, the ground was white, If you are a good scholar, you can guess this by tomorrow night. – The ground was covered with snow and the boy could not plant the seed* [18: p. 231]; *My father gave me some seeds to sow, the seeds were black, the ground was white. Tell me that riddle Saturday night. – Ink on paper* [18: p. 439]; *A Dish full of all kinds of flowers, you can`t guess this riddle in two hours. – honey* [18: p. 440]; *At the end of my yard there is a vat, four-and-twenty ladies dancing in that; Some in green gowns, and some with blue hat. He is a wise man who can tell me that. – A field of Flax)* [18: p. 348].

Phrases like this treat the riddle as a challenge for the listener and estimate the level of his/her capacity of finding the answer. End-phrases may set the deadline for giving the answer (Saturday night) appeal to the person`s mental acumen. It is difficult to say whether these phrases really help people to find the answer, but they boost them to search for the answer as quick as possible.

End-phrases seem to us to be closely tied with fairy tale plot, where heroes have to solve some problems to save someone or to get the desired spot. Giving the wrong answer means death or dreadful penalty, but it is common knowledge and everyone understands it even without additory phrases.

Given phrases are used to start and finish the riddles and to a greater extent perform a pragmatic function, without affecting the denotation encoding process. Moreover, such phrases are typical for other cultures: in the Russian folk riddle there are also similar phrases.

However, along with typical phrases in the English riddles   unique ways of describing the denotation were revealed. Often the description of the denotation anticipates the motive of the way that does not introduce additional information for decoding the desired object. The motif of the way is represented by such phrases: *As I was going to../ As I went over …. The most frequent phrase depicts crossing the bridge: I was going across London Bridge, I met a car of guinea pigs. They were kicked; they were hacked; They were all yellow-backed. (Oranges)* [18: p. 167]; *As I went over London Bridge, I heard someone cough and call. His leg was bone, his teeth was horn. Unriddle that riddle , I give you all my corn (A rooster)* [18: p. 193]; *As I went over Lincoln Bridge, I met Mister Rusticap; Pins and needles on his back, a-going to Thorny Fair (A hedgehog*) [18: p. 211]; *As I was going across London Bridge, I peeped down through a crack. I saw Old Mother Hubbard with a blanket on her back (A mud turtle)* [18: p. 219].

This frequent recourse to London bridge is made due to the history of its existence. As we know, London bridge was founded in Roman times and connected the banks of the Thames. Of course, many legends and stories are associated with place, so this artifact is reflected in the riddles. Crossing London Bridge is shown as a powerful place, because there you can meet someone, hear or see something interesting. Maybe London Bridge was the specific place in early times and many important events took place there.

Going over a hill, down the road is used not so often: *I was going over Dingledown Hill, and I saw a grey horse (Moon)* [18: p. 138], *As I was coming down the road, I saw two-wings chase four wings, till four-legs broke up the fight (A bird was chasing a dragon-fly, when an ox came along the road and let the dragon-fly escape)* [18: p. 165]; *As I went up a hill, I met a swarm of wild swine. Some a nak, some a nick, and some the color of brown tobacco (bees)* [18: p. 167].

The motive of the way presented in the overcoming of the hill may indicate the topography, which influenced the process of coding the object. Documentary sources claim about the ubiquity of the hills, and this was reflected in the folklore text [19].

Sometimes it is possible to detect the direction to the city. In this case, we can differentiate the city, places where there is a large community of people, the exchange of goods, there is the opportunity to earn money, and the village, quiet secluded place: *Little Mary went to town , wherever she stop she leave a bit of her tail (Needle and thread)* [18: p.191].

The motive of way may be represented by crossing someone`s territory: *When I went through the garden gap, whom should I meet but Dick Red-Cap, A stick in his hand, a stone in his throat. Guess me this riddle and I`ll give you a grout (Cherry)* [18: p. 230]; *I was going to the garden gate, I met a man with a stick in his hand, and a stone in his throat. Who was he? (A cherry)* [18: p.231].

But still even having so much examples of representing the motive of way does it make any sense for those who are looking for the right answer. Here are two riddle with the only one difference. The first one contain the motive of way, in the second it is omitted: *As I was going over London Bridge I saw a boat , and in this boat there was something with a red coat (A lobster)* [18: p.232]; *A lady in a boat with a yellow petticoat (Moon)* [18: p.233]. Then what is the use of inserting this geographical position and the process the narrator was doing before describing the object itself? May be it is a certain English tradition to indicate where the event takes place, but we are talking about figurative situation? Moreover, inserting the motive of way can`t predict the upcoming situation. It may be on the bridge, far away from it, in the river and etc.

Another way of beginning the riddle is mentioning somebody`s possessing of upcoming object. As a rule father is presented  in the quality of possessor: *My father has a little pony in his yard and there`s only one man, little Johnny, can ride it. Johnny ride with a pair of white reins and he go over a bridge (Needle is the pony, thread the reins, the crooked finger is the bridge, and the thimble is Johnny)* [18: p. 143]; *My father has a horse in his yard; it jumps and jumps, and the rein get shorter and shorter (Needle and thread)* [18: p. 143]; *My father has a girl with three eye, but only one he could see out (Coconut)* [18: p.185].

 Mother presented in this quality seldom: *My mother had a child, she had a long dress, every step she made, her dress came shorter (Needle and thread)* [18: p.219]; *My mother has a lot of little children, she send them to go and bathe. They dry the water (Rice)* [18: p. 409]; *My mother have a barrel, haven`t got no staves (Eggs)* [18: p. 497]; *My mother had so many children, she could not count them (Stars)* [18: p. 406].

As you have noticed, inserting father`s or mother`s possession does make the description less difficult, but still they are embedded. It also might be an English tradition to mention family members in the riddle instead of saying *There is something somewhere.*

Given insertion can reveal the logic of thinking of the English people, their perception of the world. So, the mention of the geographical position of the narrator may allow to clearly imagine the situation, however, the narrator has nothing to do with denotation. Perhaps this method makes the riddle more concrete, and this facilitates the task for the listener. Similarly, we can consider the situation with the reference to family members. In this case we are talking not about an abstract subject, but a specific and owned by the father of the narrator, despite the fact that sometimes the stuff may look absurd: *My father has four children, none can`t go without the other (Carriage wheels)* [18: p. 409]; *My mother has plenty children, she can not touch one (Jaspaniards, tropical wasps)* [18: p.409].

4. Discussion. The current research has faced several questions that can be explored in different way. The first one is the following: can we take phrases such as *When I went across the London Bridge* as a folk formula. The second one touches upon the problem of cultural peculiarities. Can the mentioned formulas really be closely tied with spatial characteristics of their place of living?

5. Conclusion . The study of folklore formulas in the riddle suggests that any inclusion in the text of sustainable turnover performs a specific function. The authors identified phrases that begin the riddle. Such phrases are mostly used to attract the attention of the listener to the subsequent message. The final basic phrases are used for maximum motivation to answer correctly, because otherwise people will be killed or punished. In a separate group, the authors selected the sentences that represent the motive of the way in the riddle. The motive of the journey is found in the early mysteries and serves as a smooth transition to the description of the denotation. Similarly we perceive the inclusion of a family member when talking about a certain subject, though reference to the owner of this object can be deleted without affecting guessing. The examples raised a number of questions because discovered quite a significant part in the structure of English riddles, which should be studied further and in close relationship with the culture of the country.

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